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K.G.B. DEFECTOR GUNDAREV

Once in the U.S. and debriefed, defectors are often cold-shouldered.

One became a dishwasher in a noodle shop,

another a bellhop.

By David Wise



T DUSK ON AN evening in January 1986, two men from different worlds strolled together down the street of an Athens suburb. The taller of the two, a solidly built man with receding red hair and broad features, spoke good but heavily accented English. His name was Victor Gundarev. He was a full colonel in the K.G.B. His message was direct and elec-

trifying: He wanted to defect to the West.
His silver-haired companion, then the C.I.A. station chief in Athens, knew just what to do. As it happened, he was not only a veteran clandestine operator for the agency, he specialized in Soviet operations. David Forden had been chief of the agency's Soviet-East European Division only two years earlier.

Every C.I.A. officer dreams of a highlevel Soviet "walk-in," and K.G.B. colonels do not come along every day. Forden, following the rulebook, asked Gundarev, the chief of counterintelligence and security for the Soviet residentura, or K.G.B. station in Athens, to remain in his post as a spy for the United States. Gundarev declined. "They wanted me to stay in place," he said later. "I refused. I told him, 'I am not recruit.'"

Forden stalled and said he would have to consult his superiors. But at a second secret meeting, he had good news for Gundarev: headquarters in Langley, Va., had agreed. The C.I.A. would get him out of Greece. It would be a high-risk operation, but when it was over, Gundarev would have a new life in America and a new identity. Forden gave the K.G.B. man a phone number in Athens and a code name to use when he dialed. The C.I.A., he assured him, would take care of the rest.

THREE YEARS LATER, ON JUNE 21 OF this year, the telephone rang in my office in Washington. "This is Victor," the voice said. He would not, at first, give his last name, or say from what city he was calling, nor would he leave his telephone number. But he said he was a former K.G.B. colonel who had defected in Greece three years before and had been living underground since then, under the protection of the C.I.A. Cautiously, Victor provided more details. He had become so disillusioned with his treatment by the C.I.A., he said, that he was seriously considering redefecting. He read me a let-

David Wise is the author of "The Spy Who Got Away," a book about Edward Lee Howard, the first C.I.A. officer to defect to the Soviet Union.



ter he had written to William H. Webster, the Director of Central Intelligence, in April, a letter that had gone unanswered. "I have received only promises, delays, and lies, the same problems that caused me to defect from the U.S.S.R.," Gundarev wrote. "I came to conclusion after three years in U.S.A. that those people who would like to defect with the help of C.I.A. should think

'Victor" broke off the conversation but promised to call back the next day. He did. I asked him a few key questions. From his replies, I was satisfied that I was indeed talking to Victor Gundarev, former colonel of the Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security).

Gundarev sounded angry and upset. The agency, he claimed, had stalled for more than two years in providing his family with green cards and Social Security numbers, had searched his belongings, tapped his telephone and short-changed him of \$10,000 in expenses they'd promised to reimburse. He said the C.I.A. had urged him not to go to the news media with his story, but he hoped I would write about his case. "I want to let them know I am not schoolboy," he said. He also disclosed that he had telephoned the Soviet Embassy to ask for a meeting with Soviet officials (in the safety of the State Department) to try to find out what fate might await him if he returned home. "I think I was court-martialed, but I don't know my sentence," he said.

We talked on the phone several more times, and it became apparent that the C.I.A. might be about to find itself with another Yurchenko case on its hands. Vitaly Yurchenko, the K.G.B. official in charge of all spying in North America, defected in August of 1985. Three months later, he walked away from his C.I.A. escort in a Georgetown restaurant. Two days afterward, he held a dramatic press conference in the Soviet Embassy and then flew home to Moscow. His redefection was a great embarrassment to the C.I.A. In its wake, the agency promised Congress it would undertake a major overhaul of its ailing defector. program.

AS THE YURCHENKO AND GUNDAREV cases suggest, the C.I.A. is having trouble handling defectors. More than mere bureaucratic bungling is involved. The agency's problems with defectors appear to be rooted in its own recent history, in its counterintelligence mission and in a deeply ambivalent attitude toward defectors on the part of at least some

of the C.I.A.'s "reset-

Yet defectors are a major source of information for the intellicommunity and the Government. They provide signifi**Victor Gundarev** at a diplomatic function in Athens, where he was chief of security at the K.G.B. station.

The C.I.A. gives some defectors big money. One received nearly a million dollars, but promptly lost it in Houston real estate.



Eugeny Novikov. left, a former party official, worked as a bellhop after defecting. Vitaly

Yurchenko, right, boarding a plane. embarrassed the C.I.A. by his redefection.

cant data about Soviet weaponry, foreign policy and intelligence operations against the West. They may bring vital clues that unmask moles inside the United States Government or spies operating on the outside. Vitaly Yurchenko, for example, provided information about two Soviet spies, Ronald W. Pelton, a former employee of the National Security Agency, and Edward Lee Howard, a former C.I.A. officer. Howard escaped to Moscow, but Pelton is serving a life sentence for espionage.

Despite the importance of the defector program, former C.I.A. officials say that until recently it was managed by agency retreads, time-servers awaiting retirement who had been passed over for promotion. Although the new head of the C.I.A.'s Resettlement Office - whose identity is secret gets high marks from his clandestine colleagues, the damage done in the past still haunts the program. And the C.I.A., despite its promise to make improvements, was slow to move after the Yurchenko debacle.

Defectors have been an important and often controversial part of the intelligence agency's history from the start. Under the legendary counterintelligence chief James J. Angleton, the Central Intelligence Agency was racked by conflicts between key defectors and a mole hunt inside the C.I.A. that lasted for two decades. The agency's handling of the Yurchenko episode was a direct legacy of its mismanagement of a much earlier case, that of Yuri I. Nosenko, a K.G.B. officer who defected in 1964. For more than three years Nosenko was confined under harsh conditions, much of the time in a windowless eight-foot-square concrete cell. C.I.A. interrogators tried repeatedly to break him, to prove he was a plant. They failed, but in the wake of the Nosenko case, the agency bent over backward to avoid violating the civil rights of defectors. As a result, Yurchenko was able to stroll away from his C.I.A. escort unimpeded.

Some of the agency's current difficulties stem from its counterintelligence priorities. When a defector "comes over," the agency's Counterintelligence Center has the difficult task of determining whether the newcomer is bona fide or a plant - a "dispatched agent" under Soviet control. Sometimes no clear conclusion can be reached. Most counterintelligence officials, for example, believe that Yurchenko was a real defector, but the matter is not resolved.

The C.I.A. is much more interested in the information defectors may bring than in their future welfare and comfort. Several defectors interviewed complained that once debriefed, they were cast aside. "I got a lot of promises when I was 'fresh lemon,' "



Victor Gundarev wrote to Webster, the Director of Central Intelligence. "Up to now those things are still promises."

Clearly in the eyes of the agency, there is a hierarchy among defectors. Soviet intelligence officers are resettled and supported; some are given startlingly large amounts of money. Others may literally end up as dish-

In the past, many of those handling defectors looked down upon their charges. As a former covert operator for the agency put it, "Too many of our people had the attitude that these guys were traitors to their own country. They could never be trusted."

MY ARTICLE ON THE GUNDAREV case, disclosing his complaints and his threat to redefect, appeared on the Op-Ed page of The New York Times on July 9. The next day, the C.I.A., which normally confines itself to a "no comment," issued a 307word statement vigorously defending its defector program. The agency said that Gundarev had been paid "a substantial amount of money," and it assailed some of his complaints as "false," including the "allegation that the C.I.A. invades the privacy of individuals." The statement ended on an odd note; it said the C.I.A. "welcomes" a Congressional inquiry.

It got one. Since executive branch agencies, especially secret ones, do not normally welcome Congressional investigations, it was obvious that the agency was trying to get the jump on an inquiry already brewing.

Prodded by William W. Geimer, the president of the Jamestown Foundation, a private group that aids defectors, the Senate and House intelligence committees had been preparing for some weeks to scrutinize the C.I.A.'s defector program.

The Gundarev disclosure brought matters to a head. On July 25, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence began closed hearings on the defector issue. The House

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence launched its own secret inquiry. William Webster testified before the Senate panel, as did several defectors. Victor Gundarev was not invited.

ALTHOUGH THE C.I.A. admits that as recently as this year it has found "certain deficiencies" in its program for handling defectors, it says that its program has been substantially improved in a number of ways, a view in which several respected former intelligence officers concur. It is not, however, a view shared by all defectors. In a number of cases, defectors have had major problems with the C.I.A. Some examples:



EL GEISSI Stanislav Levchenko and Alexandra Costa each defected in the late 1970's. They were married last year and now are writing a novel.

■ Anatoly Bogaty, the acting K.G.B. resident in Morocco, who defected in 1982, lost almost a million dollars that he had been paid by the C.I.A. after he entrusted his money to an investment adviser recommended by the agency. Bogaty, who lives in the Washington area under another name, declined to be interviewed. But he has told his story to several friends

- Eugeny Novikov, a former top Arab specialist for the international department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, found himself working as a bellhop at an upscale Alexandria; Va., motel after the C.I.A. had finished debriefing him.
- Alexandra Costa, the wife of the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Washington, who had been a professor in Moscow with university degrees in sociology and Scandinavian languages, was urged by the C.I.A. to go to secretarial school when she defected a decade ago.
- Vladimir N. Sakharov, a former Soviet diplomat (Continued on Page 82)

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in the Middle East who had been co-opted by the K.G.B., risked his life to work as an agent in place for the C.I.A. before he defected in 1971. He was devastated when the intelligence agency sent him to a motel management school in Hollywood.

■ Andrey Sorokun, a Soviet graduate student fluent in three languages who defected in Japan six years ago, was dumped in Manhattan penniless after four months of debriefing by the C.I.A. in Munich. He found a room in Spanish Harlem and considered himself lucky to get a job as a dishwasher at an Oriental noodle restaurant on East 45th Street.

Y FRIDAY, FEB. 14, 1986, Gundarev had made his final decision to change sides. Despite glasnost and perestroika, the cold war, or its modern equivalent, is still being fought in the shadows by the intelligence agencies of East and West. Gundarev was well aware that the greatest risk lay ahead in the next few hours. For months, he had been feuding with his chief, the K.G.B. "resident," Athens Nikolai Tikhonovich Krestnikov. He had learned that Krestnikov planned to ship him back to Moscow early, action that could lead to a reprimand at headquarters.

Only a week before, Gundarev's wife, Tatiana, had met with Krestnikov to air a number of complaints, not least among them her husband's affair with Galina N. Gromova, a somewhat younger, blond woman who taught at the school maintained by the Soviet mission in Athens. Gromova was, in fact, the teacher of the Gundarevs' 7-year-old son, Maxim. (Another son, Igor, 14, was at school back in Moscow.)

"I told the embassy I was going to a doctor," Gundarev recalled. "I drove to the school and picked up Maxim and Galina, who lived at the school. I called David from a pay phone and gave the code name." Gundarev drove to a suburb of the Greek capital. There, C.I.A. officers were waiting. "We switched cars. I was flown out of Greece and taken to a safehouse near Washington."

As Gundarev was flying the Atlantic, four heavily armed K.G.B. men in two cars with their headlights switched off circled the American Embassy in Athens for hours. When arrested at 1 A.M., they said they were looking for a

At the safehouse, Gundarev said, "I was debriefed for several months." When the debriefing was over, the agency's counterintelligence staff, headed by Gardner R. (Gus) Hathaway, a veteran C.I.A. officer, turned the former K.G.B. man over to the agency's Resettlement Office. Gundarev was given a new identity. With agency financial support, he was relocated in another city along with Galina - who is now his wife - and Maxim. Although Gundarey will not reveal where he lives, the city is apparently in the Western part of the United States. By the fall of 1986, both Gundarev and the C.I.A. hoped he would blend into the populace and quietly disappear.

THE JAMESTOWN FOUNdation occupies the ground floor of an aged, four-story, gray stone town house a few blocks north of Dupont Circle in northwest Washington. It looks slightly spooky, just how one would imagine the headquarters of an obscure foundation that deals with the C.I.A. and with defectors from Soviet and other communist nations. William Geimer, the foundation's president, chain-smokes Salem Lights as he talks about what he perceives as the shortcomings of the Government's defector handling. He is an intense, dark-haired man of 52, a lawyer who served in the Nixon Administration. Later, he represented Arkady N. Shevchenko, Undersecretary General of the United Nations and the highest-ranking Soviet ever to defect, in Shevchenko's rather stormy dealings with New York publishers over his memoirs.

It was after that experience that Geimer decided there should be an organization to help defectors. With money from wealthy business associates in Chicago, he started the foundation and now works for it full time. He said Jamestown receives no C.I.A. or other Government money. "Some people think we're part of the agency, but it's not true," Geimer said. "There's been a war between us, a quiet war. For years I've been going over there complaining. Typically, I have a list of things I want them to take action on. They agree to look into it. Then nothing happens. I've given up on my ability to deal with them qui-

In mid-June, Geimer met with the chairmen and ranking members of the Senate and House intelligence committees. He turned over to them a six-page memo stamped "Confidential" that amounts to a devastating critique of the C.I.A.'s defector program. After defectors are debriefed, Geimer's memo said, "the agency no longer has much use for them. In fact, it has tended to view them as problems."

Geimer lit up another filter cigarette. "Defectors should be helped because they are unique sources of information, insight and analysis on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe," he said. "Glasnost doesn't make defectors less needed. Quite the contrary. They should be listened to more than ever before. These people make a contribution to us. We have a duty to them."

Donald F. B. Jameson, a former C.I.A. officer who oversaw the handling of defectors during a long career in Soviet operations, agrees, but for a practical reason. If (Continued on Page 94)



ONE GUNDAREV REVELATION: The Strange Case Of Officer Bothwell

When a Soviet defector comes out, the first question that C.I.A. counterintelligence asks is whether he or she knows of any Soviet penetrations of United States intelligence. Victor Gundarev gave the C.I.A. the name of John H. Bothwell, a former officer of the

C.I.A. who had, before that, served as a submarine captain in the United States Navy. Gundarev claimed that he had been running Bothwell as his agent.

Two days after Gundarev's defection, officers from Scotland Yard's Special Branch sur-

rounded Bothwell and arrested him as he stepped off a train at London's Paddington station. The 59-year-old retired C.I.A. man was booked on espionage-related charges, accused of violating Britain's Official Secrets Act by arranging to communicate information 'useful to an enemy." Bothwell was imprisoned for six weeks, then freed on bail.

In July, all charges against him were suddenly dropped. The embarrassed British prosecutor, Michael Bibby, told the Bow Street Magistrates Court that Bothwell had been arrested on information "from a very good source" that he had passed NATO secrets to the Soviets. In Athens, the court was told, "he had legitimate business with the Russians, but pressure was put on him by them to supply information. He also admitted making dead letter drops to the Russians but it is now conceded that any information he did pass was to dupe the Russians."

John Bothwell, who grew up in Narberth, Pa., a Philadelphia suburb, joined the Navy during World War II and rose to the rank of commander. He was skipper of three submarines. The C.I.A. recruited Bothwell after he retired in 1965 and sent him to Athens under commercial cover as a shipping-supply agent. When he left the C.I.A. in 1972, he remained in Athens in the shipping business, later moving to England. Gundarev arrived in Athens in 1983, his cover a job as representative of the Soviet Ministry of Merchant Marine. In interviews Bothwell gave after the spy charges against him were dropped, he said he often met with Gundarev. He said he began supplying harmless information to the K.G.B. agent so that he could inform the United States Government of "what the Russians were interested in."

Bothwell did not return telephone calls last month asking for comment on Gundarev's charges. Gundarev said another K.G.B. agent handled Bothwell before him for about six years and left. "That's why I was sent to Greece, to handle him," Gundarev said. "He was considered to be a valuable agent." He said senior officials of the K.G.B.'s First Chief Directorate from Moscow "met Bothwell abroad several times." Gundarev claimed in the interview that Bothwell "provided information about submarines, about what the C.I.A. wanted to know about the Soviets, and he identified many C.I.A. officers, both in London and Athens. He described their family life, kids, money — identifying those that we might be able to recruit. The most valuable information he provided was about Ohio-class nuclear subs," better known as Tridents.

The former K.G.B. man also claimed that Bothwell took a trip to the United States and the Far East around 1982 and "the K.G.B. paid for it." He added: "I paid him \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year. He was paid in cash, no receipts." Bothwell was paid "more or less the same" amount for 9 or 10 years, Gundarev claims — for a total of between \$360,000 and \$500,000.

Could Bothwell have been a double agent, or merely duping the Soviets as he later claimed? "I had some doubts," Gundarev said. "But the bosses believed in Bothwell."

- David Wise

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defectors are helped, he said, "it may encourage others."

The psychology of defectors has been little studied, although one intelligence veteran cited two characteristics "that almost all defectors share — career frustration and problems with spouses." Typically, he said, defectors tend to be "bright and ambitious."

Since the number of Soviet and other defectors handled by the C.I.A. is classified, the total can only be estimated. But Clair George, the agency's former deputy director for operations, has said privately that there are about 750 defectors in the program, some dating back to World War II.

According to Geimer, there are three distinct categories of defectors. "Most of the C.I.A.'s defectors are '110's.' Geimer said. Under Public Law 110, the Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, the director of the C.I.A., with the approval of the Attorney General and immigration authorities, can quietly bring in up to 100 aliens a year for intelligence or national se-curity reasons. "The 110's are well paid," Geimer continued. "There's a commitment to support them for life, if necessary. But the defectors are not told that." Keeping the defectors uncertain about how long their C.I.A. payments continue helps the agency to control them, Geimer indicated.

A second group of defectors are partially supported. "At the C.I.A. they call them '55's. It's a sort of in-house slang — you know, half of 110." Unlike the "110's," who are mostly K.G.B. or other Soviet intelligence officers or persons who spied for the United States, the "55's" tend to be mediumto high-level defectors from the Soviet Union or other countries - diplomats, military officers and government officials. The third group consists of lesser officials, students, athletes, artists and others. "The third category," Geimer explained, "get a hearty handshake and that's

LATE IN JULY, GUNDArev agreed to be interviewed in person. There were two interviews on successive days, lasting a total of more than five hours. The meetings took place in separate locations in Washington. There were no C.I.A. officials or other persons present.

Toward the end of the second interview, Gundarev agreed to be photographed with his face in shadow. Why not live openly, as some defectors - but very few from the K.G.B.— do? "Neighbors would say I am K.G.B. My son might be bothered at school." Was he worried about what the K.G.B. might do to him, about his personal safety? "For sure. There's some risk. True, times change."

"So you are less worried about 'wet affairs?' I asked. (The chilling phrase is K.G.B. jargon for assassinations.)

"Yes, they had mokrie dela," he said — Russian for "wet affairs." "I don't know a single case in the last 15 years or more. But there is risk."

Now 49, Gundarev was born in Siberia and entered the K.G.B. at 19. He was a member of the party and before that of Komsomol, the Soviet youth organization. He rose through the ranks of the First Chief Directorate, the K.G.B. arm that spies in other countries, and before arriving in Greece six years ago had served in India and Portugal. A barrelchested man of military bearing, just under six feet tall, he speaks in a rapid-fire style, occasionally groping for the correct English word. He is bright, highly articulate and independent-minded. He would have to be to voice his discontent with the agency in public; defectors under C.I.A. protection are supposed to be silent and invisible.

The bureaucracy in Langley is not the first Gundarev has battled. In Athens, he clashed with Krestnikov, the resident, and others in the mission because of what he said were his efforts to expose rampant corruption. "An engineer in the trade mission in Athens hanged himself," Gundarev said. "I prepared a report saying he committed suicide because he was not promoted because his bosses were corrupt; they had taken bribes from Greek businessmen. The engineer had tried to stop it and he couldn't. My report was not sent to Moscow. I was not allowed to tell the truth."

Gundarev says that his motive for defecting was personal in part, but claims that his larger reason was political: "I was a little ahead of Gorbachev in trying to follow perestroika in the K.G.B."
Like so many defectors, Gun(Continued on Page 112)



Arkady Shevchenko, the Undersecretary General of the United Nations and the highest ranking Soviet official to defect, became a U.S. citizen in 1986. His wife, Elaine, is by his side.

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darey, once safely resettled, found the transition traumatic. The C.I.A. pays him well, he said, declining to name the figure except to say it was "more than \$30,000 a year. But it's not enough to cover my 30-year mortgage, state and Federal taxes, and provide for my son's future.'

Gundarev's main complaint is that the C.I.A. promised a lot but they haven't given me the documentation you need to exist in this society." He is particularly bitter about what he says was a promise of fast "At first they citizenship. promised citizenship and then they said I was a party member and sorry, wait five years and then you may apply.'

Most immigrants must wait five years to become naturalized citizens. Soviet defectors who were party members may have to wait

an additional five years. Under a little-known section of the immigration law, however, persons who make an "extraordinary contribution" to "United States intelligence activities" may be given citizenship after one year. The Director of Central Intelligence can recommend five such persons each year. The C.I.A. declined to comment when asked whether Victor Gundarev had been promised early citizenship, but officials familiar with his case insisted he had not. However, Gundarev is not the only defector to suggest that the C.I.A. promised quick citizenship and reneged, and the subject is an especially touchy one in Langley.

When asked about delays in providing defectors with immigration and Social Security documents, C.I.A. officials tend to blame the other agencies involved. Still, the suspicion lingers among I some defectors that the agency uses delay as a lever of control over their lives.

In its angry response to Gundarev's initial complaints, the C.I.A. maintained that Gundarev had "rejected the agency's efforts to place him with firms" in a suitable job. "To our knowledge, he has not sought employment on his own," it added. But Gundarev said the agency had come up with "only one job offer, in March of this year. I agreed to meet with the company but the meeting didn't take place."

It was true he had not sought employment on his own, Gundarev said, but for a good reason. "I cannot, because I have no documents except green card. I can't just walk in, because the company would say 'Who are you? What jobs have you held, where are your docu-ments?' "The C.I.A., he said, had promised to provide "a legend to back up my life," a euphemism for a false résumé. "I can't admit my true name," he said. "They say I have not applied for In the past, said a former agent, 'Many of our people had the attitude that these guys were traitors to their own country.'

jobs on my own. Sorry guys, how can I? They have not provided documentation in my new name, to back it up."

For its part, and despite the Gundarev affair, the C.I.A. continues to insist that its defector program has been substantially upgraded. James W. Greenleaf, who directs the agency's public affairs office, said the C.I.A. devotes "significant resources" to helping defectors and their families, paying for educational expenses, and in some cases,

medical bills. The defector program's budget and staff have been "increased substantially," with more senior managers, "more languagequalified personnel," and strengthened psychiatric and psychological counseling services. In addition, Greenleaf said, "an independent external review board has been established to address grievances" by individual defectors.

Former C.I.A. officials who closely monitor the treatment of defectors say that improvements have been made. Donald Jameson, who has worked with many defectors, said he was optimistic. The official ultimately responsible for the defector program is the agency's deputy director for operations, known as the D.D.O., a job held since 1987 by Richard F. Stolz, a C.I.A. veteran whom Webster brought back from retirement. "The head of the resettlement program is now an excellent D.D.O. person with Soviet experience," Jameson said. "They have the best person I could imagine their

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